

# **Representing Parents In Child Protective Proceedings: How Effective Advocacy Can Further The Best Interests Of Children**

**An Interactive Workshop**

**July 25, 2007**

**8:30 am – 4:30 pm**

**Michigan Hall of Justice Conference Center  
Lansing, Michigan**



***State Court Administrative Office,  
Family Services – Child Welfare Services  
Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice***

***Cosponsored by:  
University of Michigan Child Advocacy Law Clinic  
Michigan Department of Human Services***

This program is funded by a federal Children's Justice Act grant to the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice administered through the Michigan Department of Human Services, under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Administration of Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, CFDA 93.643, being sections 107(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f) as amended (42 USC 5101 *et seq.*); and the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, as amended (42 USC 10601 *et seq.*) In addition, this is a joint project of the State Court Administrative Office and the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice, chaired by the Honorable Elizabeth A. Weaver, Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court.

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#### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

This interactive workshop will discuss advocacy strategies for attorneys who represent parents in child protective proceedings. Participants will work through a series of simulated exercises designed to highlight issues that may arise at different stages in a child welfare case. The training will address relevant issues, including how to build effective relationships with clients and other parties, client counseling, and improving litigation skills. Active participation by all attendees is expected. The training will conclude with a candid facilitated discussion regarding issues, concerns, shared strategies, and ideas to improve practices to more effectively advocate on behalf of parents involved in the child protection system.

#### **FACULTY**

**Richard Cozzola** is the supervising attorney of the Children's Law Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, the largest provider of civil legal services to the poor in the Chicago area. The Children's Law Project represents families involved in the child protection system in the Cook County Juvenile Court, and works with foster parents, relative caretakers, adolescents, and parents involved with the Department of Children and Family Services.

Formerly, Mr. Cozzola was the program director of the Civitas Child Law Center at Loyola University Chicago, where he helped develop the curriculum and other elements of that program. From 1990-93, he worked with the Office of the Cook County Public Guardian, where he was the Deputy Public Guardian in charge of the Juvenile Division and the Director of Training. From 1984-90, he was the supervising attorney of the Cabrini Green Legal Aid Clinic, where he specialized in representing adolescents involved in the juvenile and criminal court systems.

He has been involved in extensive trial and appellate litigation on issues related to children, including *People v. Brown*, concerning confessions of adolescents, *In re D.T.*, a recent Illinois Supreme Court Case establishing a burden of proof for the best interest stage of a termination proceeding, *In re E.L.*, concerning fraudulent adoptions and the best interests of a child, *In re Terrell L.* concerning the Juvenile Court's authority to transfer guardianships, and *In re Ayala*, a case focusing on standards in third-party custody actions against fit parents. The Children's Law Project of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago specializes in court and administrative representation concerning children in the child welfare system. Its goal is to ensure that the children involved in its cases have homes with families that are able to sustain and support their growth. To meet this goal, the project represents children, adolescents, parents, foster parents, and relative caregivers.

Mr. Cozzola is a regular faculty member and lecturer at the annual National Association of Counsel for Children/ National Institute of Trial Advocacy - Child Advocate Training in Denver, Colorado. He has also been an adjunct faculty member at Loyola University Chicago School of Law and DePaul College of Law. He has conducted trainings on issues related to courtroom advocacy and multidisciplinary issues in child welfare cases for attorneys and child welfare workers in Illinois, Arkansas, Indiana, and at the national conference of the National Association of Counsel for Children. He has also published articles on legal issues related to child abuse and neglect and a case file focusing on child abuse and neglect for the National Institute of Trial Advocacy.

**Vivek S. Sankaran** is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School in the Child Advocacy Law Clinic, in which law students represent parents, children, and the Department of Human Services in child protection cases. Mr. Sankaran graduated from the University of Michigan Law School and earned his J.D. *cum laude*. Following law school, he joined the Children's Law Center (CLC) in Washington, D.C., as a Skadden Fellow to represent child witnesses to domestic violence and became a permanent staff attorney with the CLC in September 2003. He directed the Center's Pro Bono Guardian *ad Litem* Project, which recruits and trains volunteer attorneys from local law firms to represent children in domestic violence and child custody cases. Mr. Sankaran also supervised attorneys handling child abuse and neglect matters and carried his own caseload representing children, parents, and caregivers in abuse, custody, and domestic violence proceedings at both the trial court and appellate levels in the District of Columbia. He has trained students, attorneys, and judges across the country on child welfare and domestic violence issues and has published articles on legal issues related to child abuse and neglect, including works focusing on the rights of parents involved in such proceedings. He has also been certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children.

**Frank E. Vandervort** is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Michigan Law School. Before joining the faculty, he was Program Manager of the Michigan Child Welfare Law Resource Center. Since 1997, he has been the legal consultant to the University of Michigan School of Social Work's Family Assessment Clinic. He is a co-principal investigator on a federally-funded interdisciplinary training program regarding the recruitment and retention of child welfare workers. Mr. Vandervort is a member of Michigan's Child Death Review State Advisory Committee and the Citizen Review Panel on Child Death, and has served as a consultant to the Michigan Judicial Institute, the Office of Children's Ombudsman and the State Court Administrative Office's Permanency Planning Mediation Program. He writes and speaks frequently regarding children and the law

#### **ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS:**

Due to the interactive nature of the workshop, attendance at the training will be limited and preference will be given to attorneys representing parents in the child welfare system. If space is available, others may wish to attend including:

- Judges/referees
- Attorneys representing children and other parties in child protective proceedings

**REGISTRATION:**

**There is no registration cost to attend this training session.** The cost of this training is generously funded by the Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice. All training materials, parking validation, lunch, and afternoon breaks are provided. Mileage and lodging will not be reimbursed and are the responsibility of individual attendees.

**LODGING INFORMATION**

For those who need overnight lodging, a limited block of rooms has been reserved until June 24, 2007, at the Radisson Hotel, with a special single room rate of \$65.00. The Radisson is located at 111 N. Grand Avenue, Lansing, MI 48933. To make your reservation, contact the hotel directly at: 517-267-3444. When making your reservation, please specify that you are attending the State Court Administrative Office training to ensure that you receive the reduced rate.

The Michigan Hall of Justice Conference Center accommodates persons with disabilities. If you require special accommodations, please indicate your needs on the registration form.

**REGISTRATION:**

Priority for registration will be given to attorneys representing parents in child protective cases and consideration may be given to ensure geographic diversity. Registrants will receive an e-mail informing them whether they have been accepted to attend and providing further forum details approximately two weeks before the training session.

**Fill out and return the completed application form no later than  
June 29, 2007.**

For information, contact Joy Thelen at 517-373-5322 or [thelenj@courts.mi.gov](mailto:thelenj@courts.mi.gov).

**Please feel free to copy and distribute this announcement to other child welfare professionals in your community.**

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(Please print or type legibly, as this information will be used for your name tag.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Court/Agency/Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Year of State Bar admission: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Dietary Needs: \_\_\_\_\_ Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ (Workshop confirmation will be sent by e-mail.)

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe your experience working with parents in child protective proceedings. In what context have you worked with parents? For how long?

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**Return completed registration form by June 29, 2007, to:**

**State Court Administrative Office  
Family Services- Child Welfare Services  
925 W. Ottawa  
PO Box 30048  
Lansing, MI 48906  
Fax: 517-373-8922**

**For further information, or if you require handicap access to facilities or special assistance at the program, please contact Joy Thelen at 517-373-5322 or e-mail her at [thelenj@courts.mi.gov](mailto:thelenj@courts.mi.gov).**

Space is limited, so please return your registration as soon as possible to maximize your opportunity to attend. Your registration is a commitment to attend the entire training. Please do not register for this training unless you have the scheduling flexibility to attend. If it is necessary to cancel after you have been confirmed to attend this training, please contact Ms. Thelen as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. **Onsite registration is not available.**